

Support for Social Security cuts across party lines. It cuts across racial lines. It cuts across geographic lines. Americans not only want to protect Social Security and Medicare—that goes without saying, although many of my colleagues want to undermine it—but they want to make these programs stronger.

But that is what Republicans—I don't want to make this into a partisan issue, but it has been, unfortunately. It is not what the Republicans in Congress want to do.

I want every American to understand that Republicans in Congress are planning to hold your Social Security hostage. They have done it several different ways over the years. So let's talk about it today.

They have threatened not to raise the debt limit. Raising the debt limit sounds complicated and sounds expensive. It is not. Raising the debt limit, said another way, is about paying our bills, paying the bills our Nation owes and keeping our word. We did this three times under Donald Trump with no drama. Their refusal to pay our bills undermines U.S. global leadership.

For seniors, it would be a disaster. It means that Social Security checks would stop going out. It would mean that seniors won't get their Social Security checks if we don't keep our promises and pay our bills. It is the first way this year that Republicans will attack Social Security.

Second, they want to take this country and the American economy to the brink of default and then leverage their fiscal lunacy to cut your Social Security. Ten years ago, 15 years ago, Republicans didn't act this way. It is this new—just going down the hall here, you can see the other place, the place where the other ones work. The people who are the most extreme in that body clearly are trying to bring this country to the brink. They are willing to take the U.S. economy hostage and only agree to pay our bills—bills we have all run up, including a huge part of that with President Trump and the Republican Congress with the big tax cut giveaway to the richest people in this country—they are willing to take the economy hostage and raise the debt limit if Congress cuts Social Security. The only way they are going to pay their bills is if Congress cuts Social Security. That is what they are saying.

Let that sink in. Congressional Republicans intend to use the fact that we need to pay our bills, pay our bills that already have accrued—to pay our bills is their tool for cutting Social Security. You might disguise their policy as a commission. Every time you hear the word “commission” and then they describe the next part of the sentence to reform Social Security, you know what it means. Their plan is to leverage this: We are going to not pay our bills to cut your Social Security.

Finally, there is privatizing Social Security. The details differ. The terms may change, but the goal is the same:

to kill off Social Security by shrinking it and privatizing it and undermining public support.

It doesn't matter if you voted for this Republican or that Republican who sits at these desks or Senator CASEY or Senator WYDEN or Senator KAINE. Overwhelmingly, people who go to the polls and vote support Social Security and don't want Social Security privatized.

What is happening is nothing less than an attempt to go back on the bedrock promise made to America's middle class that Social Security would be there for them.

On August 14, 1935, Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act. In 1940 or 1941, for a woman in New Hampshire, I think her first check was \$24. I believe she was a retired schoolteacher and got the first Social Security check.

It doesn't matter to them, to Social Security beneficiaries, about all the politics here. But we know that for Social Security checks, people paid into the program their whole entire working lives. Our government should work for people who paid into Social Security, not against them.

When work has dignity, we honor the retirement security people earned. I urge my Republican colleagues in this body—colleagues, I point out, with healthcare and retirement plans; all of us with healthcare and retirement plans paid for by taxpayers—our retirements aren't at risk. Why should it be for Social Security beneficiaries? None of my colleagues over here are saying: Let's privatize the retirement system for Members of Congress.

They never say that. They say: Let's privatize Social Security. Let's privatize the Veterans' Administration in Richmond or Cleveland or Cincinnati. Let's privatize Medicare.

They never talk about privatizing their benefits.

But think about the generations of Americans who have benefited from Social Security and the generations to come relying on the promise of Social Security and Medicare.

For the last part of my remarks, Mr. President, I introduced a resolution affirming the Senate's commitment, last year, to protecting and expanding Social Security.

Dozens of my colleagues got on this bill, including, I believe, the Presiding Officer—a resolution affirming the Senate's commitment to protecting and expanding Social Security. But you know what? Not one Republican signed onto this resolution; not one re-committed to the promise of the American people that if you work hard all of your life, Social Security will be there for you.

What is more American, what is more basic, what is more family-oriented than: I pay into Social Security my whole life, I pay into Medicare, and if I get prematurely sick or disabled or when I retire, why would we not honor that commitment? Why do some Mem-

bers of Congress want to privatize this program? Because we know what happens when they are privatized. The investors come in, the banks come in and end up undermining it, and there is less dollars—fewer dollars available and less public support.

Americans shouldn't have to worry that politicians secure with government pensions are going to try to take away their retirement benefits that they earn. I will again introduce that resolution—probably next month—affirming the Senate's commitment to protecting and expanding Social Security, opposed to privatization.

I will again ask all my colleagues to sign on. I assume we will get many. I am hopeful this time—hopeful—that some Republicans join us. Republican seniors in Ohio would support it. It is just, their elected officials so often don't.

People shouldn't have to worry if politicians who put our entire economy at risk by using this debt limit fight—this “are we going to pay our bills or not” fight—to cut social security, but here we are.

I urge my colleagues to do the patriotic duty to raise the debt limit, without condition, without threatening economic calamity. And I ask that you work with us to do what the American people overwhelmingly want: protect and expand Social Security and Medicare and VA benefits.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Georgia.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME—S.J. RES. 4 and H.R. 22

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I understand that there are two measures at the desk, and I ask for their first reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the measures by title for the first time.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 4) removing the deadline for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

A bill (H.R. 22) to prohibit the Secretary of Energy from sending petroleum products from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to China, and for other purposes.

Mr. WARNOCK. I now ask for a second reading, and I object to my own request en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard. The measures will be read for the second time on the next legislative day.

APPOINTMENTS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to 22 U.S.C. 276d-276g, as amended, appoints the following Senator as Chairman of the Senate Delegation to the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group conference during the 118th Congress: the Honorable AMY KLOBUCHAR of Minnesota.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair, on behalf of the Vice President, pursuant to the provisions of 20 U.S.C., sections 42 and 43, appoints the following Senators as Members of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution: the Honorable CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO of Nevada (reappointment) and the Honorable GARY PETERS of Michigan.

MORNING BUSINESS

TRIBUTE TO PATRICK LEAHY AND TIM RIESER

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize an excerpt of this article by George Black, honoring the legacies of Senator Patrick Leahy and Tim Rieser, that was originally published in the *New Republic* on December 19, 2022.

I ask unanimous consent that the following excerpt honoring Senator Patrick Leahy and Tim Rieser be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the *New Republic*, Dec. 19, 2022]

FOR PATRICK LEAHY, THE VIETNAM WAR IS
FINALLY ENDING
(By George Black)

For 33 years, the retiring Vermont senator and a top aide have quietly but doggedly been working to bind the many wounds of a war that touched the lives of nearly every Vietnamese family. This is what public service is.

It was a late afternoon in mid-November, with the nip of early winter in the air, when I visited the Russell Senate Office Building to meet with Vermont Senator Pat Leahy in his spacious yet surprisingly intimate office, with a sofa and chairs arranged near the fireplace. An aide squatted down beside us to add another log to the fire. Leahy's wife of 60 years, Marcelle, joined us, carrying a large bouquet of flowers. The couple still convey a strong sense of the people they were in the early years of their marriage—he a small-town lawyer, she a nurse at a local hospital. Leahy showed off photos of their three children and five grandchildren. “I’m not someone who wants to hang the walls with photos of 50 great and famous people I’ve known,” he said. “I’d much rather be surrounded by pictures of family.”

Leahy, who entered the Senate in 1975 and leaves it after 48 years in January 2023, is the body's longest-serving sitting member. To most Americans, he is probably best known for his decades on the Senate Judiciary Committee and his opposition to the drive by conservative activists to transform the federal courts into an instrument of their ideological agenda. But I'd come to talk to him about something different, something that rarely if ever makes the cable news circuit: the war in Vietnam, the wounds it had left, and the part he had played in healing them. He's never seen this as a partisan issue, just a matter of simple human decency, being one of those, like Joe Biden, who mourn a lost era of comity in the Senate, in which political adversaries could still reach with respect across the gulf of their disagreements. His work in Vietnam has always been underpinned by that vision, and I wanted to ask him whether, in our current divided state, he could imagine it continuing after his retirement from the Senate at the age of 82.

Vision alone doesn't get you far in Washington. It has to be turned into legislation, and legislation into dollars and cents. In addition to his role on the Judiciary Committee, Leahy also chairs the Appropriations Committee, which is where the purse strings are untied, and, as he wrote in his recently published memoir, *The Road Taken*, “few people really ever sifted through the line items to understand what we were doing was actually making American foreign policy.” It's also why you can't talk about his work in Vietnam without also talking about his senior aide, Tim Rieser, who has been with him since 1985, and who will retire from his current role in January. Despite his bland-sounding job title—Democratic clerk for the Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations—Rieser has been the master of its arcane mechanics. “A dog with a bone,” Leahy calls him. Given a problem to solve, “He would not stop until every last drop of marrow and morsel of sinew had been licked clean.”

Since 1989, as the United States and Vietnam were taking their first baby steps toward reconciliation, Leahy and Rieser have channeled hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to Vietnam, forcing the United States to take responsibility for what former Senate leader Mike Mansfield once called the “great outflow of devastation” from the war: the bodies broken by unexploded bombs; the lives blighted by exposure to Agent Orange; the ongoing threat from “hot spots” contaminated by dioxin, its toxic by-product; and now, at last, some long-overdue aid to help Vietnam recover and identify the remains of its war dead. In the process, they have built the scaffolding of a new relationship, in which bitter enemies, in one of the stranger twists of geopolitics, have been transformed into close working partners and military allies.

Leahy and Rieser have faced no small number of obstacles along the way. For many years, embittered American veterans and recalcitrant anti-Communists in Congress opposed any hint of reconciliation with Vietnam. Progress was often slowed by suspicions on the Vietnamese side and by cumbersome bureaucracies in both governments, and State Department and Pentagon lawyers remain wary to this day of any humanitarian effort that implies an admission of liability. But as Rieser often says, when you run into an obstacle, you redefine it as a problem to be solved, and that process starts with all parties identifying their common interest in finding a solution. There are always common interests; you just have to look for them.

Full article at: <https://newrepublic.com/article/169542/patrick-leahy-vietnam-war-finally-ending>.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. KING. Mr. President, I rise to provide a brief statement on the vote on the confirmation of the nomination of Brendan Owens, of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense. I was unable to attend the vote because inclement weather in Maine caused my flight to be canceled. Had I been here on Monday, January 23, 2023, I would have voted in support of the nomination.

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF FOXGROFT ACADEMY

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, Foxcroft Academy in Dover-Foxcroft,

ME, was established on January 30, 1823, with a mission of bringing quality education to pioneer families in our new State. On this 200th anniversary, it is a pleasure to congratulate this outstanding school for its dedication to excellence and opportunity.

The history of Foxcroft Academy demonstrates that commitment. It was the first school chartered in Maine after we achieved statehood 3 years earlier. It is one of the oldest private day and boarding preparatory high schools in America.

That charter was the result of extraordinary vision. The school's namesake, Colonel John Foxcroft, born to a prominent Massachusetts family, was successful in business and amassed a considerable fortune. His wealth enabled him to acquire thousands of acres of prime timberland in the wilderness of Maine. With the growing cities of early America nearby, he could have exploited this natural resource and added greatly to his fortune.

Instead, he chose to offer opportunity. He opened his land up to those less fortunate; he encouraged settlers to come to clear farmland, construct mills, start businesses, and build their homes and their futures. The people of the fledgling settlement raised \$100 to build a wood frame building to create a school and a true community.

Today, Foxcroft Academy sits upon a beautiful 125-acre campus with a full array of state-of-the-art academic, athletic, and residential facilities. More than 350 day students live in Dover-Foxcroft and neighboring towns, and an additional 100 international students come from 20 countries around the world.

Foxcroft Academy is renowned for high achievement in academics, athletics, and the arts. Its designation as an Apple Distinguished School recognizes its successful integration of technology into education, and its inclusion in the International Baccalaureate Program acknowledges its commitment to helping students become good global citizens.

The school's motto is “Knowledge is Power.” Whether graduates go on to college, the workforce, or the military, they leave Foxcroft Academy empowered to succeed.

Foxcroft Academy was founded with a pioneering, innovative spirit that is carried on today by students, faculty, administrators, and supporters. This bicentennial year is a time to celebrate a school that holds a special place in Maine's history and in its future.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DAVID HUDSON

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Sebastian County Judge David Hudson who recently retired after nearly five decades of service to the county and its citizens.

Judge Hudson grew up in Fort Smith. I have been blessed to know him since